Supervising Research Teams to Ensure Ethical Practices

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Background

- Serious or persistent noncompliance and research integrity violations cause serious problems

- Even good researchers can find research programs frozen if they do not practices good habit

- Researchers are generally trained to do research, not how to lead and manage research teams
Understanding Root Causes of Serious Noncompliance: Our Approaches

1. Studied more than 100 cases of violations in research
2. Surveyed nearly 1,000 NIH-funded researchers to examine:
   • Ethical decision-making / Values / Role of Culture / Attitudes / Knowledge of Rules
3. Pre- and Post-testing of PI Program participants (sent for remediation)
4. Interviewed 52 Research Exemplars to understand good research practices (Antes, PI, K01)
**WHY RESEARCHERS STUMBLED**

Instructors on the Professionalism and Integrity Program assessed underlying causes (often more than one) for researchers’ lapses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proximate cause</th>
<th>Ultimate cause of researcher lapse</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of attention</td>
<td>Overextended, not detail-oriented or distracted by personal problems.</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure of rules</td>
<td>An increase in regulations since researcher began career, lack of mentoring or cultural differences.</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not prioritize compliance</td>
<td>Failed to recognize seriousness of violations, biased thinking or cultural differences.</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems, political tensions</td>
<td>Communicated aggressively or worked with difficult personalities.</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff lacked adequate training or integrity</td>
<td>Failed to provide adequate training, did not create culture of compliance in lab or had difficulty hiring individuals.</td>
<td>28%</td>
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## Root Causes of Persistent Noncompliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication</td>
<td>Failed to hold regular meetings with research team.</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>Driven personality, desire for promotion or competition for funding.</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting roles (physician–scientist)</td>
<td>Interacted with individuals as both patients and research participants.</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not anticipate consequences</td>
<td>Failed to consider ways a project could go wrong.</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>Inadequate institutional investment in researcher’s programme.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed poor instructions</td>
<td>Rigid hierarchy in research programme and the absence of positive mentors to consult.</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
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PI Program Approach

We try to address root causes of lapses in research compliance and integrity by addressing:

- Attitudes
- Decision-making strategies
- Work habits
Attitudes: We Foster Acceptance

• Compliance can be unreasonable and burdensome
• But it's important to protect:
  • Institutions & self
  • Sometimes participants & public
• Accept it
Good Decision-making Strategies

See SMART Strategies Handout

Seek help
Manage emotions
Anticipate consequences
Recognize rules
Test assumptions
Good Work Habits

See handout on good lab leadership and management practices

In your own research program, which practices in each category do you think you most urgently want to adopt?

1. Management practices
2. Leadership practices
3. General work habits
Q & A

Lab website:  
www.professionalandsocial.org

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www.integrityprogram.org

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